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Do We Need Christ for Communion with God?

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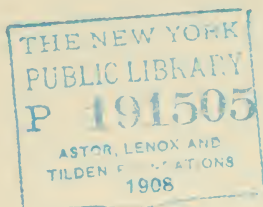
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DO WE NEED CHRIST FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD?

Complaints and charges are heard respecting estrangement from religion and apostasy from the Church. And yet an earnest interest is felt in our time concerning the truth of religion; far-reaching questions are made concerning life in the Church. When materialism was at its high water mark many rejoiced at the supposed end of religious belief; but, through all jubilations and the victorious shouts of exact science, of technical progress and a civilization reveling in enjoyment, there obtruded with irresistible power, not only from the bottom of the popular mind but also from the very heights of culture, the need of ideals which are not merged in arithmetical computation, nor found at the bottom of the crucible and the retort.

In the Religious Studies of a Worldly Person, Riehl says: "The clearer we perceive the advances of our time in science and in the whole national life, the stronger we become and we long for an inner apper-

ception of our existence, which no inquiry and anatomy can give us; for a first cause of our moral endeavor, which is not contained in outward works of righteousness; for a consolation and hope which even the proudest trump of human subservience of the powers of nature cannot offer us." All due honor to natural sciences! But they give no answer to the deepest questions of the human mind, no satisfaction for the deepest need of the human heart.

The religious question has to do with the highest dedication of life—peace and tranquillity, eternal salvation, final possession of truth. In the sense that without him no one can come to a communion with the Father in heaven, Jesus offered himself and still offers himself, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The question as to the religion which in like manner satisfies the heart and reason, becomes of itself therefore the question as to Christ.

Never before has so much been written concerning the Christ as in our day. Who was Jesus? What did he mean? What did he claim to be? What has he done? How did they think of him in his time? Thus

the questions buzz in endless disquisitions and discussions, in which is contained the decision on the pretended "assured results" of negative criticism, that they are not assured, but entirely unsatisfactory, and in which the key-note sounds through: What have I to think of Jesus Christ? Buried a thousand times, he is a thousand times again the Risen and Exalted One. This unconquerable vigor of religious imperishableness forces the question: Is it not merely because of the historical connection in which every one stands by birth and education that innumerable individuals know themselves bound to Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Redeemer? But, must it be really so, that I can satisfactorily arrange my religious relation to God only through the mediation of Jesus Christ? In other words, is he not merely, "religio-historically" considered, the founder of the Christian religion, and is he any more than one of the founders of religion? Is he, in fact, the one absolutely necessary and unrefusable mediator between God and man?

There are at present many, who do not mean to be irreligious and unchristian, and

yet they care little for the Person of Jesus Christ. So far as they are directed to him, they know not what to do with him; and so far as he comes to them in Christian teaching with the claim of believing in him, they neither show nor feel their need of him.

It is of importance to understand the disposition and temper of this attitude. It is founded in the difference between that which is given with human nature and that which has historically become such. Much as all of us are conditioned and influenced by custom and tradition, we can yet separate ourselves within certain bounds from that which has historically become so. For example, one can leave the country to which he belongs by birth; he can divest himself of received habits and views of life; he can even—but indeed not wholly—abandon his mother-tongue. But that which one can never give up entirely, at least not successfully eradicate with the root, is the uniform continuance of his human nature with its psychical talents and mental forces. In consequence, that which with the psychical organization was given to human nature as continual and unchangeable, has often turned against that

which has only become ours historically. In the realm of religion since the days of English deism, the war-cry is heard: Away with positive Christianity! Man has religion by nature. It is the same longing for communion with the eternal, the infinite, which speaks in the highest developed religions as in the dull fetichism of heathenism. It is only needful to put aside that which has historically become, in order to hear the original, natural sound of the pure language of the human heart.

Rousseau harked back from the corrupt culture of rotten conditions to the artless simplicity of nature. Thus in religion, one only wishes to know something of the originally universal communion with God. But Lessing and Kant put intellectual truth in opposition to historical science, and represented the view that historical information and tradition can only establish historical knowledge, but never convictions of truth. The certainty of truth, they affirmed, belongs exclusively to reason. Thus the attempt to eliminate everything historical from religion, to reduce all religion to impulses of feeling, emotions, volitions,

notions, mind-activities, and rational ideas which come from the uniform essence of human nature, continued through the nineteenth century. Occasionally it was pushed back, sometimes apparently overcome, but it always fostered rationalism. And this rationalistic abrogation of the Christian element in Christianity has at the present again obtained a power which, after the displacement of the old rationalism, one would not have believed possible. In the keenest manner the opposition to everything historical in religion, to everything specifically Christian—for Christianity in its essence is an historical religion—has been expressed at the present time from a philosophical point of view by Eduard von Hartmann. In the preface to his book on the Christianity of the New Testament (Sachsa, 1905), he says: "Whoever is serious in the application of the development idea to the religious consciousness of humanity, knows also that in no historical phenomenon can he seek more than a relative degree of development, and that no historical critique through the uncovering of this relativity, can disturb his religious consciousness which rests on an absolute

foundation. Historical foundations of a religion are always subject to doubt, and can never give the assurance of the conviction which the religious consciousness needs, and which can only be drawn from one's own heart.¹ Whatever rests on the foundation of belief in providence and the doctrine of development knows that God has ways and means enough to realize even more perfectly the religious ideal in humanity. He requires no historical surety for this faith in a solitary, absolute, perfect realization of the ideal in the past and cannot be disturbed in the quiet self-certainty of his religious consciousness by any historical criticism, because it can never do more than reveal the relativeness of all past degrees of development."

According to this philosopher, the fate of all historical religions, Christianity included, is relativeness, and rationalistic theologians of the present adopt for the most part the same idea. Whether they declare Chris-

¹ The philosopher of the "Unconscious" is by no means disturbed in his constructions by such accidental things as facts; but facts prove, that reason relying upon itself, can never obtain religious certainty, but that on the contrary its fate is skepticism. Assurance of religious conviction originates only in the personal union with the prophetic personality in which the bearer of the absolute revelation of God is seen.

tianity is being evolved in the stream of the history of religion, in order to profess an abstract religious idea, or, whether they bring Christianity to this abstract religious idea, amounts to the same thing. As Augustus Dorner expressed it in his way in an address delivered in 1904 before the Protestant Union on "The Christian Doctrine According to the Present State of Theological Science"—he should have said more correctly: "According to the Rationalism of the Eighteenth Century"—Christianity is the absolute religion, "provided its kernel coincides with the rational, universally accepted form of religion—with the ideal of religion—when in it that is perceived as essential which remains the same in all its historic forms."

For this conception the historical in Christianity has only the value of the symbol of continuous ideas of universal natural religion. Can we be surprised that clear thinkers, without any regard for ecclesiastical prejudices and traditions, put aside the symbolical cover as a superfluous burden, yea, as an untrue cover? Of what benefit is an indirect path to God-

communion through Jesus, what is the use of a Christian husk of religion, if one can have religion itself if the direct way to communion with God stands open? In his rough manner Kathoff, who in a certain sense takes a true position against rationalists of the Bousset sort: that is, "rather no Jesus at all than yours," in his work *The Religion of the Modern Man* (Jena-Leipzig, 1905, p. 102), uses the brutal expression: "a God who should be believed, because learned men assert that the son of a carpenter in Palestine believed on him two thousand years ago—is a God which does not deserve the printer's ink which is used on his account." Of course this blasphemy of the former monist preacher is at the same time a strange folly. One is not to believe in God because Jesus believed on him, for the work of Jesus rested on this, that in the ages before him, belief in God already existed. But this is the meaning of the life-work of Jesus; that in him as the essential revelation of God, the Creator of heaven and earth manifested himself to humanity as heavenly Father, and that he, as the only begotten Son, mediated communion with the heavenly Father.

Do we need this revelation and this mediatorship of the historical Jesus? Or, is the true religion of immediate communion with God without any history? This is the question.

In the first place, the fact holds good here : that religion, as a real, vital power, without history, does not exist at all. With full right the example has been repeatedly chosen : no one can have a fruit tree without selecting an apple tree or pear tree, plum tree or cherry tree. No one can say : I will have no fruit tree, no coniferous tree, no oak, no lime tree ; I want a tree which has nothing of these. I want the tree *in itself*—a tree of reality ; and thus a living religion exists only in the real religious. To be sure religion, as such, is at the bottom of all concrete religions, but to bring it to light is the theoretical task of religious philosophy. But from religious philosophy there never comes a living religiousness ; much, rather, belongs to concrete religions. Religious philosophy reflects on the existing religions and their work, but procreates no religious life. Piety exists in natural religions ; sometimes, as in the Hindu, very much. But natural re-

ligion cannot establish conviction; it may expand in natural growth, but it does no missionary work, it cannot assert itself for any length of time over against the world-religions, for which reason Max Müller predicted the inevitable decay of the Hindu religion. Only in religions which have their root in a definite foundation of religion does there rush forth the fresh spring of personal communion with God.

The practical impotency of religious philosophy becomes obvious also when we ask those who wish to reduce Christianity to universal, natural religion, what this universal, natural religion is. Augustus Dorner, who wishes to trace Christianity back to it, must confess that a difference of opinion arises at once when we consider its meaning and content. When Hartmann assured us that the historical foundations of a religion could never give the assurance of conviction which the religious consciousness needs, the counter-question is not only allowed, but necessary: Can it rest on philosophical constructions? A hundred times less! And, if we wished philosophical foundations, to whom of the philosophers, contradicting each other,

should we go? The inability of philosophy, in the present time along productive lines is illustrated by its clinging to natural science, by eclecticism, and by the preponderance of the history of philosophy over the real work of thinking. But, if it were really more valuable than it is at the present, there is not nor can there be a fixed philosophy, not even a fixed religious philosophy. As soon as one leaves the firm ground of biblical revelation all the old mutually antagonistic world-views over which thinkers since times immemorial have quarreled, at once reappear. Pantheism in its changing, unsettled forms, ever springing up anew from the activity of thought, from a feeling of nature, from a sense of world-woe or of self-loss; deism in its various forms of expression which arose at the period of the *Aufklärung* in opposition to existing systems of religions; theism in its imaginable blending of color, always however somehow conditioned by biblical revelation—all these come before us and not one of the manifold philosophical systems is able to create a vital religion. Perfectly unfruitful in this respect—impotent in themselves, they

can do nothing but criticise existing historical religions. In this, their critical attitude, which with many philosophers is besides very doubtful, they ask the individual in Christendom, how much of Christianity he wishes to retain. Thus, in Christendom, no man has universal, natural religion, but all those who do not wish to stand on Christian ground and yet desire to retain religion, have what may be called an "abatement-religion"—that is, they stand in greater or lesser approach to or distance from Christian truth.

This fact cannot be illustrated better than by Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*. As is known, Haeckel is at the present time a late representative of that sturdy materialism of brief thoughts and quick resolutions which has been outridden long ago and scientifically overcome. He is a declared enemy of Christianity, an ardent fanatic of the blindest hatred of all religion, yet he would preserve morals; that morality which he sees in the equilibrium of self-love and love of neighbor. This golden, moral law he finds in the statement of Jesus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!" In this most important and highest commandment, mo-

nistic ethics, he thinks, fully agree with Christian ethics. What folly! What are monistic ethics? If man is nothing but a higher genus of animal, and yet the animal has no moral obligation; if humanity has no God above it, no heaven before it, no divine image and no inborn conscience in it, no foundation of eternity under it, what remains of monistic ethics beyond the known statement: humanity without divinity leads to bestiality? And, when this atheist still acknowledges Christian morality within certain bounds, what else is this but an involuntary acknowledgment of the Christ whom he indeed denies, whom he opposes, whom he imagines he can shake off, but of whom he cannot fully rid himself, as no one, whose mental life has formed itself on Christian ground, whose spiritual life received its stamp in the realm of Christendom, in the psychological continuance of his character and his mode of thinking, can ever plainly and entirely divest himself of, nor of all and every influence of the holy life-sphere which came from and belongs to Jesus Christ! Riehl says: "A modern, seemingly irreligious humanity, nevertheless, takes

root finally in the soil of Christian love which, in the dark centuries, already first taught to anticipate, afterward to know, all men as brethren, as equal children of God, as equally in need of redemption and as partaking of the like redemption."

Whoever, like Riehl, has his vision sharpened by historical education for the origins of mental factors, and is therefore able to perceive them in their singularity, sees in all historically important phenomena their religiously dependent character. To illustrate this fact by a universally intelligible observation: One can at once affirm of every philosopher, whether his training of thought was received on Catholic or on Protestant ground; and even of scholars who, at least, want to know anything of religion, the fewest will deny the stamp of their confessional faith. If this holds good for confessional peculiarity, it holds good all the more for the larger domain of religion. Imagine for once such opponents of historical Christianity as Voltaire and Rousseau, Strauss and Feuerbach. Such figures can only be understood on the soil of Christendom; and because their Christianity puts

them in reciprocal action with historic Christianity, they were obliged to honor in their opposition the Christ whose work they opposed. Not only his disciples helped the glorification of Jesus Christ, but the Sanhedrin also which passed the sentence of death on him; Judas, who betrayed him; Pontius Pilate, who gave him up to the cross; the cultured and uncultured mob which mocked him.

Since, then, it is evident that in the general relations of our mental and moral existence no man in Christendom can wholly withdraw from the influences which emanated from the world-renewing and the world-transforming power of Jesus Christ for that part of humanity which is put under his influence, it will be seen that this holds good also in a preëminent degree in personal piety. All who wish in some way to cultivate a living, personal communion with God, whether conscious of it or not, are influenced through Christ, in the nature of their communion with God. As we can only fully understand the civil-social conditions of our native country from a comparison with the conditions of other countries, so also, we can under-

stand the peculiarity of Christian religiousness only by a comparison with a different kind of piety. The Buddhist has a religion without prayer, and so far as he practices prayer, it is self-reflection or a contradictory invocation of subordinate world-powers; for his religion is pantheistic, the self-redemption of asceticism. The prayer of the Mohammedan comes up to ceremonial injunction, and his faith is submission to the necessity of a divine decree. The Jewish religious exercise is severe bondage to ritual legality, and, in spite of all religious struggling, there exists the uncertainty as to the sufficiency of the performance and its uselessness with reference to the obtainment of divine acknowledgment.

But to Christianity belongs free faith in the active ruling of a divine providence which does not neutralize the power of freedom, but releases it. Here lives the power of prayer which confidently accommodates itself to the ways of the living God, and yet humbly brings all requests before him in the certainty that the Almighty has the course of the world in his hands. Here exists the certainty that, though wrong seems to tri-

umph and malice often puts down the good and good ones, yet, over the good or bad will of the millions stands a higher Will, whose world-government leads the development of the human race to his ultimate purpose. Here prevails the idea that the course of the world is not aimless; that moral action is not fruitless and unsuccessful, but tends toward the final end of the kingdom of God, which is appointed by God. Here prevails the certainty that our life is not merely a confused dream, or the popping up of a bubble which soon explodes, or even a misery which is to be cast off as quickly as possible; that life does not end here, but that there is a seed-time on earth for an eternal harvest, a time of preparation for eternal life.

Thus, with a high idealism which fills the whole of existence with supernatural content, with a radiant light, with a joy glorifying every suffering and animating every action, the Christian view of God and the world raises the members of Christendom to a value transcending the natural earthly existence through which value the mental life receives a rich content, and the spiritual life a safe support.

“The good God greets many, who thank him not,” says a well-known proverb: “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” How much thankfulness reapeth his infinite love which is new every morning? Jesus Christ fills many with spiritual good who refuse the hand which offers it. And yet—aside from the suggestions which science and art have received through him, the freedom and uplift which he has given to the poor and oppressed, the transforming influence exercised upon society and thus upon social order, the organization which he gave to the world of nations, by means of charity—what rich religionism, what spiritual content of Christianity, which they oppose or deny, just because they are provoked at it, forms the background of their world-view? Let them refuse it! Nevertheless because they refuse it, but continually busy themselves with it, they are by reason of that very fact kept from falling into mere nothing and thus becoming empty of all idealism.

But that which brings about such far-reaching and comprehensive effects, puts be-

fore the more serious mind the question, How is it to act? for such a mind does not receive spiritual effects as accidental, but arranges its relation to them in a conscious manner. It cannot pass by the question: Do I need Jesus Christ for obtaining a living, personal communion with God? How often has the statement of Fichte been repeated here, if Jesus would now come again, he would care little whether his person is mentioned or not, provided his cause was advanced! And yet, it is a fact that the peculiar essence of Christianity is so bound to the person of Jesus Christ, that the mental life belonging to the Christian religion loses at once its power, as soon as his person steps back or is forgotten; yea, it forfeits all Christian content and character if his person is eliminated. But, as soon as the picture of Jesus again comes to a vivid representation and realization, the same revival-power again emanates from him. Consequently, one does not get away from the question covering the person of Jesus Christ! It preserves its lasting importance at all times; and, as stated before, the motive force of the religious question of

the present expresses itself also just in this, that, though one may not feel satisfied with the ecclesiastical formularization of the worth of his person, one cannot refrain from seeking with incessant effort after new forms in which the mystery of his person may be expressed. Riehl says in the book referred to: "The person of Christ for nearly two thousand years continually led to theological controversies, to religious party-days. In the conception of the person of Christ, the confessional believer differs from the sensationalist, from the rationalist, and all three again from the unbeliever; the theologian from the philosopher; church-historical periods and confessions separate, yea, in finer shades numberless differences in Christian belief become manifest, as soon as we put a definite question concerning the person of Christ, and as soon as the interrogated—which is more difficult—answers it honestly and definitely." Therefore, we put the question: What have we in him? Why do we need him?

The average man thinks that though he is remote from communion with God and does not know the way to obtain it, it can never-

theless be easily realized. Whence comes this? It has its cause in naturalism which, since the seventeenth century, greatly asserted itself and rapidly spread. To be sure the rise of practical naturalism required no special philosophical theory; it existed at all times and runs in the blood of the natural man. It is the immediate expression of the natural tendency of the flesh to live after the flesh. But naturalism sought and found a public power on the basis of theories which, by shaking off divine revelation, directed man to seek the sufficient strength of his self-satisfaction in the capacities of his natural psychical condition; to get the means for understanding the world and ruling the world from the treasuries of his own reason; to realize the ideal humanity by exertions of the will. This naturalism developed itself in the nineteenth century in various systems of a pantheistic and deistic character, and found its climax in materialism. Though the cultured may be ashamed of the materialism of Haeckel; though a few only may openly profess the pantheism of Schopenhauer; though the pantheism of Paulsen may find some recognition, but few real adher-

ents, though Hartmann's pending pessimism, which wishes to combine belief in providence with the great Unknown, may captivate many, but convince only a few; though Nietzsche's power of persuasion which blinds immaturity, may have lost its charm—the disposition still lives in large circles, even without dependence on certain theories, to regard human acts as necessary expression of that which man became as the product of his parents and his environment.

Paulsen may have contradicted the immoral in the book: his naturalistic pantheism includes, nevertheless, the dissolving of the difference between good and evil. And, if philosophical naturalism is scarcely wholly consistent, the practical is naturally still more inconsistent. One does not object to hearing the word sin spoken in the pulpit, but when heard in daily life, one has but a proud shrug for it, or an air of smiling superiority. But is this to be superior—to deny that which makes man a man, that which gives him superiority over the animal—the conscience? True, conscience may become an uncomfortable admonisher; but a man without this holy gift of God—conscience—

is no more man, but sinks to the level of the beast. Conscience distinctly speaks the sharp language of difference between good and evil, and with it of coming everlasting judgment. And he can dream of no communion with God who knows that sin exists in him, that his guilt separates him from the righteous and holy God. In opposition to the holy penitence of the Old Testament psalms and to the merciful call to repentance of Jesus who offers the gospel to the sinner that repents and to him only (Luke 15. 7), there stands a religious superficiality which knows nothing of the power of sin which separates from God, and which thus sinks beneath even such an animistic religion as the ancient Babylonian (with its penitential prayers). But when theologians like Weinel endeavor to eliminate the "retrospective elements" in Christianity (repentance); when theologians like Bousset declare the Pauline contrast between sin and grace to be untenable, when such theologians will not begin the preaching of the gospel with the awakening of the sense of sin, but put aside the objective reconciliation of Jesus Christ, and put all emphasis on moral self-education, it

cannot be perceived what evangelical element is still left in this teaching, which throws everything Christian into the boiler of naturalism.

The deepest essence of the Reformation consisted in this, that Luther felt the full seriousness of the power of sin which prevented communion with God, the dreadfulness of self-condemnation before God. Mediæval mysticism ventured the boldest eagle-flight of divine love for God soaring up to heaven, without distinctly feeling the curling feathers of the consciousness of sin, only to suffer for the flight of the soul by an ever repeated downfall. Despite religious height Mysticism lacked moral power and clearness. Luther clearly saw the chains of sin which paralyzed every independent flight, and therefore found the power which breaks down the barrier separating us from God, in the Son of God, who came down from heaven; who brought to us the love of God as very grace; who obtained the forgiveness of sins and restored communion with God in the gift of the Holy Spirit. This, therefore, is and remains the way to communion with God, and indeed is the only one

possible way, redemption through Jesus Christ.

No independent religious elevation and no spontaneous ethical education goes beyond the sphere of naturalness. That "which is born of the flesh is flesh." Communion with the eternal God in the kingdom of God, or in the kingdom of heaven, is possible only in our elevation above the natural. And one cannot obtain the kingdom of God by ascending into heaven, but only by receiving him who brought it down to us—Jesus Christ. Of course the way opens only to him who knows what sin is. This is the condition for receiving the gospel. Whoever will not or may not or cannot see what sin is, can of course feel no need of him who opened the way to the sanctuary of his Father's heart. Jesus came to call sinners, not the righteous to repentance. But whoever feels himself a sinner—and one would think that psychologically considered it argued a degree of dullness not to recognize the fact—whoever realizes that unforgiven sin hinders communion with God—and one would think that he only would be void of this knowledge who has no sound idea of

God—how will he find it possible to enter into communion with the holy and righteous God?

In the Jewish religion the uncertainty of the forgiveness of sin is truly affecting. Settlement of the profit and loss account of good works and of failures, as Weber shows in his book (*Jewish Theology*, Leipzig, 1897), always leaves the orthodox Jew uncertain as to the result. The Mohammedan's hope of paradise rests on the hollow arrogance of the adherents of "the prophet," connected with sad deadness of conscience and indifference to the most crying sins.

The Buddhist, denying existence in the self-redemption of asceticism, knows only annihilation in Nirvana as an end. He needs therefore no communion with the living God in our sense. He aspires not after the strengthening but the abolition of personality—a sad conception of Asiatic apathy. But he who truly wishes to find his personality, must also know that only in the absolute personality can he find the lasting value of personality. By finding God, one can truly find himself. And one only truly finds God in and through Jesus Christ, who, be-

cause uniting in his person the human and the divine, is able to build a bridge between time and eternity, whereby the carnal man becomes a man of God. It is Christ Jesus who tears down, through the merits of his life and death, the obstructing barriers which separate the sinning man, who is in duty bound to obey the Creator, from the Creator who is at the same time both judge and rewarder.

Harnack, in his book on the Essence of Christianity, described religion as an immediate relation between God and the human soul, in the sense that between them no one has anything to do. As is known it was Augustine who defined as the theme of religion: "God and the human soul, otherwise nothing!" But how little Bousset was entitled to refer to it for doing away with the mediatorship of Jesus, can be seen from this, that Augustine, according to his theme, did not exclude the Mediator, but claimed him. Indeed, there exists nowhere in the wide domain of the history of religion an immediate relation of the human soul to the Deity.

Thus, in the Babylonian religion, man ad-

dresses himself not directly to the high gods, but through the mediation of demoniacal powers, whose help he obtains through the priests of witchcraft. Rites and formulas, prayers and sacrifices, ceremonies and cults, performance and asceticism, hierarchy and law—anything and often very many things stand between God and the soul of man. How could a Jew think of communion with God without the mediation of the law? How could a Moslem without observing the Koran? But Christianity has immediate communion with God and the soul of man, because the incarnate mediator brings it about by virtue of the activity of divine grace. This as the doctrine of justification teaches, excludes even moral acts as means of obtaining salvation which, according to Harnack, Wrede, and Bousset mediate communion with God. Mysticism, void of history, believes that it is possible to cultivate immediate communion with God without a mediator—but in this it denies the importance of the ethical factor. In opposition to this the rationalism of Harnack, Wrede, and Bousset asserts nominally an immediate God-communion in the form of

moral self-redemption; but it obtains no God-communion. Self-governing morality is here nothing more than the background of a lifeless, colorless idea of God, which, with Harnack, is only a deistical, and with Bousset, a pantheistic idea. Personal communion with the holy God is something else than acceptance or possession of an idea of God!

A proof for the truth of Christianity is contained in its specific particularity which explains itself only in revelation, I might say: in its not being invented (2 Cor. 2. 9). Luther said in his book on the Unfree Will: "God works both which is childish, or mundane, or human, but divine, surpassing the human perceptive faculty." This peculiarity, transcendental for the worldly mind, but expressed in the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, is founded in this, that Jesus Christ, as the only begotten Son of God, or, as the Son of man (which is substantially the same, John 5. 27), who, according to his self-testimony, is of divine origin, can alone lead men to heaven, because he is from heaven (John 3. 13). All other religions come from below, because their founders are from below. They are the outcome of the natural

process of religious-historical development. Jesus Christ alone comes from above, and he only, as such, is the bearer of the absolute revelation. Revelation is also in other religions. All advances of religious experience and knowledge come about through the contact of the human soul with God, which opens for us his life-supplies and suggestions. But this revelation in the general sphere of the life of nations does not exclude deficiencies of human receptivity to the divine, darkening of vision, limits of devotion. Pure, perfect revelation we have only in the self-manifestation of God, in which he not only gives suggestions to men of susceptibility (John 3. 31), but actually discloses himself by sinking his life from above into a pure organ of his glory (John 1. 14; 5. 26).

Jesus, born, grown up, and educated like a man, was humanly like us. But, according to his inner essence, he called himself (John 6. 33, 35) the True Bread which came down from heaven and giveth Life unto the world. And only when he is thus the only begotten Son from the bosom of the Father, we have indeed a

positive truth, an opening to the Fatherly heart of God, an access to the upper sanctuary, an end to our struggles and endeavors, a sure salvation and an unshaken certitude. And if we give him up who said of himself: "And no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," the heaven remains forever silent to our questions, our longing dies away aimlessly in space. Who will open the door of heaven, if God does not open it to us? Who will show us the way of our destination, if God does not pave it? Who will give us a firm position in the world and an ever satisfying certainty of our attitude toward God, the world, and men, unless God's eternal light lights up our darkness? Are we to trust in human founders of religion like Buddha and Zarathustra, Mani, and Mohammed? They were sinful and erring men like ourselves. We overlook their errors and judge their weaknesses. Among other fashionable follies, through ignorance and lack of judgment, the founding of Buddhist communions may for a time obtain passing results in America and Europe; English religious sport may for a time take a lively in-

terest in Mohammedanism which belongs to confused romanticism and has little to do with the reality of Islam; Mormonism even may bring over a few infatuated ones to the only humbug-religion which exists—in Christendom no one can seriously undertake to refer to strange founders of religion, because all are subject to historical and philosophical critique. But, if one refuses to accept the only holy, sinless One who ever walked on this earth without being contaminated by its dust, nothing remains but to put every one on himself; to put in the place of the absolute revelation of God the aspiration of each individual after truth, and leave to the individual the restoration of his communion with God. Instead of the all-comprising religion of the world which embraces uncounted millions, we would then have millions of religions, in which humanity would split into atoms. To this individualism, exaggerated to absurdity, corresponds modern theological skepticism and agnosticism, which, while showing a mania to be as “modern” as possible, still wishes to retain with bashful effort some Christianity. Naumann, with the talent peculiar to him to

say the most confused things, as if they were the clearest clearness, has expressed in his letters on religion that which is typical of this religious vagueness.

Philanthropism, as represented by Rousseau in his *Emile*, wished a purely individual subjective religion by means of which every one was to restore his relation to God entirely for himself, according to his own impulses, dispositions, and inclinations. Very convenient for human sovereignty! As if, in the relation between God and man, the question were not how the All-powerful will have the relation restored! Is a mere man—dust from dust—free to treat God as an object of his will? This atomism of the individual will would yield a self-made religion in chaotic confusion of boundless variety. In practice this unlimited subjectivism is found in the free-religions and German Catholic congregations, which, on Protestant soil, emanated from the Sintenis-Uhlich movement, on Catholic soil from the Rouge-Gerske movement. What is the belief of these congregations? By allowing its members variety of all possible views, but offering no positive stability of any definite religious view, or of

any expressed confession it totters between approachment to biblical theism and materialistic atheism. Yea, the tendency would be given up to the yawning abyss of the saddest emptiness, were it not for its opposition to Christianity, its zeal against "church tyranny" and obligation to dogma, its attacks upon the Bible and hatred of Christ which give it the semblance of reality. What have these people to do with Christianity who have turned their back on the Christian Church? And yet, almost all lectures which they announce, almost all writings which they publish, deal with Christianity. Take away this polemical content, and what is left to interest a man? In accordance with this emptiness is the continual decrease of these congregations. Man cannot live by rejecting the bread which reality offers, unless something better, or at least a genuine substitute, is offered.

Religion is indeed the most individual thing, but it is also the most universal. Very few have originality in religious matters, and those who imagine they have mostly imagine it. Though the relation to God is also a relation of the individual human soul to the

Lord, it is at the same time also a relation of humanity to the Creator of the world. On this account in religious matters every one belongs from the start to a certain communion-circle by which the form of his religious consciousness is determined. He may leave it, but only to be caught up at once by a new tendency. In the main there exists no individually, self-made religion. Above all religions stands "the" religion. In religion there exists a bond of communion between God and us ere we become fully conscious of it or affirm it. This communion-bond is objective, founded in this, that we are God's creatures. But when the communion-relation in many religions is perverted by human error, we cannot at all pass by the question concerning the purity of a relation of God to us which has not been disturbed by a weak human mediation. If in the face of the variety of religions the true religion is a matter of humanity, the wish for truth must consider whether God has not somewhere brought about communion with humanity in a manner intended by him. Is every religion only an aimless striving upward to which there is no divine answer?

God, who created in his image the human race in the first Adam, has also put before us the perfection of the divine image in the second Adam—this is the content of the gospel, and only under the supposition of the objective divine sending of Jesus, is there a gospel at all. Thus and only thus is he the organizer of humanity into a humanity of God. If there is only one God, humanity, too, is one in like relation to the Almighty Father, and then there is also only *one* true religion, that very one in which he himself opened his Fatherly heart to his children in his only begotten Son.

Why is it that in our day the message of the union of deity and humanity in the incarnate God is not understood by men, that they seek new ways to come to a union with God?

Art is the mirage of its time. What does it show in the present? A boisterous, restless craving for something new, unheard of, something that never existed. It is not as if former times had not produced beautiful forms. But whether the former was beautiful or not—a change is wanted. Originality at any rate, even at the price of losing the

noble and beautiful symmetry! And, though one should ultimately arrive again at the old, it should be a new invention. Who does not think of Schiller's:

The world grows old and becomes young again,
Yet man always anticipates improvement.

In religion also, one would like to avoid the ancient paths beaten a thousand times and discover new ones. And does not one consider that for the ornament of life nothing else is offered to us than flowers which blossomed for humanity for thousands of years. Should the *blasé* once get tired of the flower-work, will the desire of innovation discover a compensation? For the ornamentation of the surroundings of our houses we have nothing but the green and the blossoms of trees and shrubs and the magnificent bloom of the garden-plots. How would a diseased state of mind help in trying to make it otherwise? We are placed in God's order of creation and, in spite of all the change of times, circumstances, views, taste, we are bound to certain unchanged orders. The stable essence of human nature is in itself also unchanged in all epochs and in all types of

nations. Its needs and wants, its inclinations and aberrations, its shortcomings and exertions are the same. But, on this account, the desire for salvation and peace is also perfectly the same as is the cry of conscience out of the distress of sin. For this reason, in full conformity to law, periods of a return to Christianity always follow times of apostasy from it. To many, the recently discovered seems as something new. Thus, today Jesus Christ meets many in old Christendom who when they find him find him with full charm of newness. When they apprehend him as their Redeemer, it seems to them as if he came before them in the same newness of heavenly originality and divine revelation as once before he came to the people of Judea with the message: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

But when, in the midst of Christendom, many must find Jesus Christ as new, considering the sermons which they never heard, is there not also somewhere a fault with the Church? There are doubtless, very great shortcomings. It can indeed be

hardly understood when, with an appeal to the reformation-doctrine concerning the two signs of the true church, pure preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments according to their institution, backward heads imagine that for effectual influence on life the same forms of preaching and administration of the sacraments should suffice as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In those times the religious factor still governed all ranks of society downward; and the spiritual interests which were turned to science and art, were limited to small circles. Besides, the ministers were almost the only ones who were able to speak freely. Whoever wished to enjoy a lively lecture had to go to church. And today? The minister has long ago been crowded out of the monopoly of free discourse. The number of lectures is legion—quantitatively considered; and qualitatively considered, the spirit which speaks out of the majority could all the more say: “Our name is legion, for we are many.” The eloquence which is here displayed is often captivating, variously fascinating. But religion is for larger circles crowded out of the position which rules the

world of culture. In some ranks it is considered as absolutely interdicted to say a word about religion. Still worse, however, than religious enmity is that deadly indifference toward the elimination of the religious factor not only from public life, but also from the relations of social intercourse. How may one in sluggish dreaming still continue to lisp the scheme of days that are past? If the people will not go to church, the church must go to them. The preaching of the gospel has not only one form, it has the most manifold forms. Jesus preached in the synagogue and in the market; in the green pasture and in the boat by the sea, in the bustle of the city and in the desert. Through Galilee and Judea, in Peræa and Samaria, everywhere he followed those in need of salvation—in order to seek and save that which was lost.

And Paul? In Christian liberty he became unto the Jews as a Jew, to gain the Jews: To them that are under the law, as under the law, that he might gain them that were under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, to gain them that are without law. To the weak he be-

came as weak, to gain the weak. Thus he was made all things to all men to save some by all means. Not every one is a Paul. But, as he could mold his voice and tried it in seeking and saving love to save those that were lost, so the Church must be able to mold her voice to be made all things to all. To many the preaching of Jesus Christ is repulsive even as to its content, when it is done in the teaching method of past times.

Christ is the living, ever new Presence. Many have no desire to hear of Jesus when he is presented to them in the dress of traditional doctrine. The "moderns" seek their strength in this, that they oppose historical clearness of palpable every day reality to dogmatical stiffness of doctrinaire formulas. But of their statements one must necessarily say they are taken from Palestinian national life and inserted into the Jewish history of religion. Human historical reality of daily observation is placed before our eyes in a popular manner. Such Jewish reformers might perhaps have lived in Galilee; but no one will be able to convince us, or even make clear to us, that the world-transforming effects which actually emanated from

Jesus Christ, could ever have emanated from such a country rabbi on his own account, or that the life-renewing effects which Jesus continually produces in human souls, as good as dead, could have proceeded from a simple Jew, who was nothing but a natural man.¹

Effects are conditioned by the merit of personality. The effects of Jesus are comprehensive, far-reaching, never growing old, operative in ever new manner. It is a foolish phrase to assert that the teaching of the God-man is no more opportune; opportune in the sense that it once had the

¹ Hermann Hesse in his book "Unter Rad," describes the lecture room of a liberal preacher (p. 65): "Dreaming mysticism and persistent gloomy meditation were banished in this place; banished also was the naive heart-theology which over the chasms of science bends in love and compassion to the thirsting soul of the people. In place of this, Bible criticism was zealously cultivated and search was made for the historical Christ, who runs from the mouth of modern theologians like water, but slips like an eel through the fingers. It is in theology as with other things. There is a theology which is an art, and another which is science, or at least, strives to be such. Thus it has always been, and the scientists have always neglected the old wine over the new bottles; whereas, the artists, carelessly abiding by many an external error, become comforters and messengers of joy to many. It is the unequal struggle between criticism and creation, science and art, whereby that is always right, without being of service to any one, whereas this again and again scatters the seed of faith, love, comfort and of beauty and the idea of eternity, and always finds a good soil. For life is stronger than death, and faith is mightier than doubt."

sympathy of the world and pleased the great masses. The gospel never was merely opportune and cannot be, for it is everlasting. But the gospel in a good sense is opportune. It ever becomes new by being preached in a manner intelligible to the times by living personalities in whom it becomes spirit and power. That is opportune which has reliance on victory and the strength to assert itself. Rothe once justly remarked: "When one says it is the demand of the time, he appeals to the incompetent public, which always places confused impulses, inclinations, and disinclinations in the place of reasons. When the Israelites preferred to worship a calf rather than the invisible God, they also thought that it was a demand of the time." Where the old rationalism from the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries is at present rehashed again, it is set forth in a completely untrue manner—as the newest achievement of science. What naturalistic unbelief refuses, it tries to present as incompatible with the results of modern investigation, though in reality, the newer critical investigation is nothing more than the offspring of unbelief which, in

ancient heathen polemics, as by Celsus of the second century, exerted exactly the same criticism on Jesus. But, where the need of redemption becomes alive in a man, the redeemer is also opportune. For where the truth of belief in God and the need of absolute revelation exists there is no difference between the obsolete and the modern.

And just as little does this revelation exist for the denial of the need of a mediator between God and man. The forms may change as to the manner of proclaiming the saving importance of Jesus, of exhibiting his worth and work. Entirely wrong is the pretense that new times demand a new Christ. Is the sin of the twentieth century different from that of the first century? Is the need of redemption of the twentieth century different from that of the first century? Our sin, said Luther, is no painted sin; wherefore a painted Saviour is of no avail.¹

The invented Christ of modern programs, who is to be adapted at any price to the bare

¹ In the exposition of Psalm 51, Luther says: "From the mistake that one neither knows nor understands what sin is, comes, as usual, still another mistake, that one can neither know nor understand what grace is."

reality of Jewish life, and on that account is as far from the real historical Christ of the gospels as the earth is from heaven, may as a mind-picture agree with the dissolution of the misery of sin in visionary haze. But, where real distress and misery of sin awakes in the roused conscience, the dreams of self-redemption and this "modern Jesus" myth might fail. The question then remains: Is this inevitable self-accusation to end in despair of God and one's self? Or, is there in reality a Redeemer who can drown guilt in the stream of divine mercy?

Invented arts of charlatans suffice for playing with disease, but serious weakness requires the real physician. Thus the sickness of humanity requires the soul-physician who brings salvation for every suffering. This Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever, as the teaching of the fourth century has rightly called him, the "unchangeable." And that this unchangeable appears as ever new to each new generation, is founded in this, that he comes to man most lovely in his personal working by being formed in those who are lively permeated by his Spirit. We have Jesus Christ in the New Testament

gospels and epistles—and when the critics fable and pretend to know other things of him than are recorded there, what trustworthy records have they? The Christ of the present should be the Christ of reality; he can be none other. But in the documentary attestation he is for many yet a dead form of the past. We have Jesus Christ in the teaching of the Church; and, in spite of all contrasts which the critics seek to establish between the teaching of the Church and the New Testament, it remains, nevertheless, a fact that the former is only the didactic form for the content of the latter. Kattenbush, a theologian of Ritschl's school, expressed it correctly when he said that by advancing discussions it has been established more and more, that the pretended contrast between the teaching of the Church and the New Testament does not exist.

But the Christ of the Church retains for many a hard theoretical character, far removed and incomprehensible. Truly religious souls, however, understand the living stamp of Christ in religious personalities. These represent not merely a theory of Jesus Christ, nor do they obtrude him merely as

an ecclesiastical law-giver or judge of legal morality, but they express him in religious power from normal life-experience, because their own life is hidden in God with Christ Jesus; so that their word of him as word from him, is Spirit and Life. Rousseau said: "Where thinking commences, feeling ceases." Were this so, it would mean for the educated (like the loss of all poetry, every enjoyment of art, yea, of all that which makes life precious) the death of all precious religion. What an empty, anæmic intellectualism is this! Christian truth requires the keenest thinking. But intellectual truth is meaningless without life-truth. He who experiences nothing in religion, has also nothing to say in ecclesiastical teaching; and, if he should nevertheless try it, he does not talk religion but falls into popular philosophy. Christian religious thinking requires for its lasting foundation an internal content in which Christ is a living present. And this brings us to the final and decisive point of our development.

As I have shown in my book on *The Essence of Christianity*, besides Christology, the doctrine of regeneration is the

most characteristic of Christianity. What does it mean? This, that in relation to the eternity-task and eternity-goal of man, a certain measure of fulfilling moral requirements is not sufficient; that human fulfillment of the law also suffices not, because natural ability is incapable of fulfilling the divine moral law;¹ that relative amendment and spontaneous development also fail to bridge over the chasm between time and eternity. That only which is in harmony with and worthy of eternity comes from eternity, and is able therefore to go into eternity. Hence, the Christian message of the kingdom of God requires of every one a totally new beginning of life in the course of the conscious life; the death of the old natural man, the birth of a new man from God. In contradistinction to every form of legalism, and also to that of modern moralism as

¹ The interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans, as if men needed grace because they had not been able to fulfill the law, but if they could have done it, they could have been saved through fulfillment of the law, is erroneous. Paul will rather say, especially Romans 4 and 42 and he expresses it clearly that, if men could have fulfilled the law, it would have been inadequate in relation to the eternity-goal, because everything human remains in the realm of the finite, temporal, and has never the stamp of the divine; therefore, it cannot stand before God. Herein lies the fundamental condemnation of every moralism.

represented by Harnack and Bousset, who conceive Christianity as a moral redemption-religion, thus bringing it down to the low level of moral self-redemption, it is peculiar to Christ that he does not demand anything which he does not give. And, with reference to the kingdom of God, which he brought, with reference to the Holy Spirit whom he mediated to humanity, he expressed the fact that no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18. 3), yea, is not even able to see the kingdom of God, without fundamental and radical renewing by the Holy Spirit which he designates as birth from above (John 3. 3, 5).

The word new birth, or regeneration, is also found on extra-Christian soil; Brahminism and Buddhism know something similar. But Buddhism understands by it only a decisive change through the knowledge of conditional resignation, self-reformation. This conversion sticks fast to nature. Kant adopted the term "regeneration" in his *Religion Within the Bounds of Pure Reason*; but, though he demands a revolution in the disposition "after the manner of the Stoa," this is for him nothing

but the direction of the volition to the fundamental acknowledgment of the moral principle. This pretended radical new beginning means nothing more than moral self-reformation. In neither instance do we get beyond the carnal, nor can we. But such views are far excelled in the Christian doctrine of regeneration. And herein already lies a proof of the divine origin of Jesus Christ. As the Son of God he baptizes from heaven with the Spirit which proceedeth from the Father, and mediates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the new humanity growing out of him. To be endowed with the Spirit from above, or to be born of God, or to be regenerated, is one and the same. The idea of regeneration in the New Testament sense could have never originated in the brain of a natural man (1 Cor. 2. 13). Nicodemus, the highly educated scribe, well versed in Old Testament prophecy, member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, a famous teacher in Israel, did not understand it—in spite of the Old Testament references to the outpouring of the Spirit and cleansing of the heart. And the very parallels, which are cited from the Talmud illus-

trating the idea of regeneration, prove how completely foreign it was to entire Judaism. In great ecclesiastical tendencies, in centuries of Christian doctrinal development it was not understood; in Catholicism it is sacramentally neutralized and thereby estranged from religious value. The so-called modern theology, though not unfriendly to it, does not know what to do with it. Conversion and regeneration are repulsive ideas and, so far as it uses them at all, it strips them of their biblical meaning through a new moral interpretation. And yet, in the sense of the teaching of Jesus, as in also that of the apostles, the fundamental view of the Pauline statement: "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," it is well established in the direction that the natural man, even with his best efforts, is fully incapable of obtaining the eternity-goal; even the most righteous by law fails. Even this very one! The Lord denied justification to the self-righteousness of intensive pharisaic religiousness and morality; but he adjudged it to the self-condemnation of publican-humility. It is not the righteousness which is by works that obtains the kingdom of heaven, but the self-

renouncing humility which accepts divine mercy as a divine gift. The kingdom of God does not beckon to natural ability, but to spiritual poverty which becomes an empty vessel over against the riches of God.

This is just the meaning of regeneration; that man sees only death as the result of all natural life-development, and therefore appropriates to himself eternal life from God in him who is the bearer of divine life, the Son of God. The statement of Paul: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" keenly defines the essence of Christianity in this way, that it mediates to its members a divine life from above. Regeneration as such, surpasses the thoughts of man. Such things cannot be invented. They cannot be searched out. They cannot be concocted. The idea of regeneration is intelligible only as it is an expression of real life—such life as only he could find, who himself brought eternal life. As the Bringer of this supernatural gift of eternal life, Jesus proclaimed to humanity the glad tidings of *the highest good*, which stretches beyond the temporal, bridges the gulf between time and eternity, and thus

made possible the attainment of the eternal goal.

Ritschl, giving a new interpretation to Christianity in the sense of naturalistic moralism, adopted the terms "supernatural and supermundane," in the sense that the moral, mental life rises above nature so far as it indicates the material connection of physical causes and effects, and rises above the bustle of the world, so far as it signifies the connection of the actually conditioned and divided existence. But the eminence of the Christian doctrinal view consists just in this, that the highest morality which grows out of the natural condition of our inborn human nature belongs also in the Christian view to the realm of naturalness and the world which remains included in the spheres of mere finite value. By this, Christianity proves its origin (in the sense of real transcendency) from supernatural and supermundane revelation, viewed even as the dogmatical preaching of a rational system, of an objective doctrine, or even of prophetic instruction. It will not set the will in motion, by means of a theory, as is the case with Buddha, but by the announcement of the fact

of the love of God which really comes down upon earth in the only begotten Son. In this it offers truth, peace, and blessedness to the humble receiver of the divine gift which comes from above. In this way the fulfillment of that, which is put into human nature, like the satisfaction of the deepest needs inherent in it, is accomplished by real divine self-manifestation and self-communication. In a supernatural gift of salvation, which lifts human nature above itself and thereby leads it to the goal appointed for it, there lies the judgment of the gospel on every human being that rejects it. This negative judgment, however, is only the reverse of the positive renewing-power, which transforms natural men into eternity-men, and thus gives them a real communion with God.

The foundation of the religion of Zaratustra, except a few after-efforts, has been blown away; that of Mani is destroyed; that of Buddha has gained over a large portion of the Asiatic race; but in spite of all efforts of self-assertion, and in spite of some efforts of self-renewing, as a spiritual power it is slowly decaying. Islam is still in the

ascendency in Asia and Africa ; it even does considerable missionary work, whose power of attraction rests on the pride and common feeling of the Moslems, on the easy propagation of ceremonial forms and on concessions to sensual temperament, but its results are and have been mostly achieved by fanatical application of force. Politically its power is broken.

Christ, however, with full clearness of mind, refused every application of outward force. Coercion, wherever it is used in the Church, is against the spirit of the gospel. Modern liberty of conscience and religious freedom, is the expression and product of Christian principle. Jesus Christ is King in the kingdom of the Spirit, without exercising at his command outward means of power. And yet he advances from victory to victory. No less a person than Napoleon made the remarkable statement that all the kingdoms of the victorious conquerors—of an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Charlemagne—have crumbled, just as his own life-work had been dashed to pieces, but the kingdom of the Prince of Peace, who refused arms and would not gather an army around him, who

refused the power of the world and all its glories, exists in indestructible power, and not only exists but in progressive conquest of the world, achieves ever new victories. May one not also see in the judgment of the wrecked conqueror of the world, on "the divinity of Jesus Christ," founded on the ever new attractive and transforming power of the conqueror of the heart, a reflection of personal resignation? In the main he pertinently expressed the inevitable impression that the energy of the efforts of Jesus Christ, defying the change of times, "exceeds the range of the creative power of man."

Jesus may ever be crucified anew; the Prince of Life cannot be killed. Crucifixion promises for him only resurrection. Here and there one may take offense at him; whole sections may apostatize from him—but progress still remains, an ever continual, unchecked winning of humanity. Jesus may be pronounced dead; Christianity may be declared overcome, or done away with; but it rises with ever new victorious power; confounds the prophecies of its death through self-renovation and in resurrection-glory

laughs at the proclamations of its destruction.

The contrast between the kingdom of God and the world is continual and cannot be bridged over. Occasionally all forces of the world seem to be unfettered for the struggle against Christ. As, by his crucifixion Jesus was destroyed according to human judgment, thus Christianity seems also at times to be doomed to destruction; but all at once it is here again, not only in old power, but in rejuvenated power. Whence these powers of strength? They rise from the hidden deeps of eternity—in some way inconceivable, incomprehensible, immeasurable, but nevertheless effective, yea, irresistible. Thus the work of Jesus is like the divine government of the world. The world sees in the world only finite causes and effects; and yet, in a slow but continually ascending historical progress, God leads the development of humanity to its final goal. The look bound to the senses, sees nothing but the factors of the visible world; and yet, mental factors are working in it which are not absorbed by it, but go beyond it; and these prove the dominating factors. Divine omnipotence, hidden

to the natural eye, a nothing for unbelief, is more effective with its surpassing power than the great powers observed by human wisdom. A proof of the divinity of Christianity is the similar supernatural and supermundane activity of the exalted Christ. In the midst of the abominations of the Roman persecution of the Christians, John saw, with an unshaken belief, the triumph of his Risen Lord sitting at the right hand of the Father, over the heathen empire of Rome. Over against every attack of naturalism on the sanctuaries of the Christian Church, the Christian faith which professes Christ retains, not merely in the form of didactic tradition, not merely in dependence on ecclesiastical injunction, not merely in connection with family-habit or out of respect for the stability of the state, but in personal devotion of individual life-communion with Christ as redeemer, the same bold, conquering wisdom, which the Apocalyptic seer once expressed in the confession to Jesus: "King of kings and Lord of lords."

